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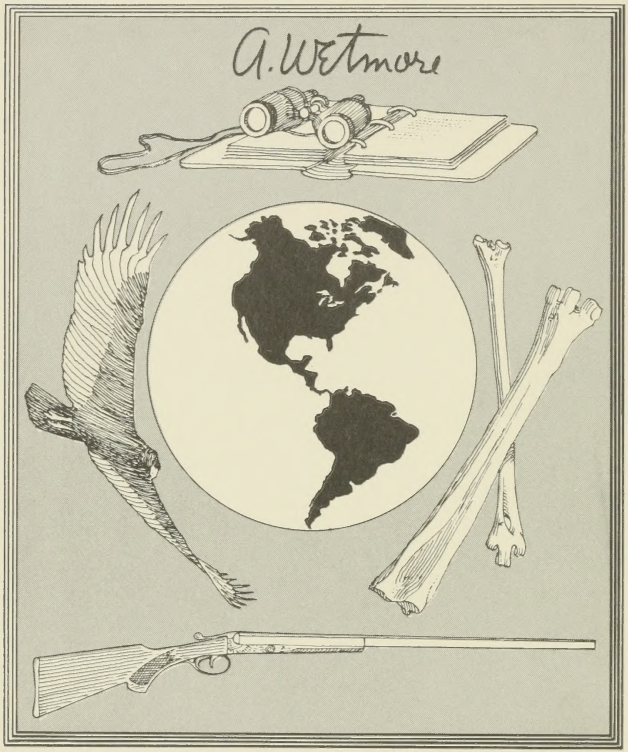

Alexander Wetmore

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A. Wetmore

Birds of Prince Edward Island

Birds

OF

Prince Edward Island:

THEIR HABITS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

BY FRANCIS BAIN.

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PREFACE.

The Author of this little booklet has for many years been a student of Birds in his native home, and has had many opportunities of observing their habits and characteristics for himself, in the quietude of a rural life. He does not pretend that all here given is original, but it has all been so checked by actual observation that it is new for Prince Edward Island.

Birds

OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

INTRODUCTORY.

Birds have always been objects of interest to mankind. Our poetry is filled with references to them.

They have been used to express the higher spiritual aspirations: "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

In the freedom of their woodland homes they are the types of happiness.

> "Emblem of happiness,
> Blest is thy dwelling place,
> Oh! to abide in the desert with thee."

In their elegance of form and brilliancy of coloring they are the soul of beauty. Montgomery has it:

"Their forms all symmetry, their motions grace,
With wings that seem as they'd a soul within them,
They bear their owners with such sweet enchantment."

Borne on equal wings, they are the embodiment of independent power. Like the eagle,

"Firm on his own mountain strength relying,
Breasting the dark storm, the red bolt defying,
His wing on the wind and his eye on the sun,
He swerves not a hair, but bears onward, right on."

They are the emblem of love. The fond doves are the spirit of tenderest devotion. And what shall we say of the music of birds?

"Sounds of vernal showers
On the trickling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, their music doth surpass."

Wordsworth says to the skylark:

"Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest;
And though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark! thou wouldst be loth
To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy liver!
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver."

"Birds, the free tenants of land, and air, and ocean," are such because of their marvelous powers of flight. The heavy-winged heron in his lumbering flight still surpasses the speed of the fleetest race-horse. The wild duck covers ninety miles in an hour, and the duck hawk 150 miles in the same time. The graceful swallow, in its ceaseless wanderings through the blue fields of the summer sky, travels a thousand miles in a day. And the endless flittings of the minor bird tribes from spray to spray, or darting into the sunny air for their jewelled prey, are ever marvels of grace, and freedom, and velocity of movements. You watch the eagle, with scarce moving pinions, sweep for miles and miles along the breezy coast, and, although you cannot observe the movement, he exerts a power sufficient to keep him from falling sixty-two feet in a second. How tireless the exercise of power put forth by the gull who wanders ceaselessly for hours, and even days, over the restless billow. The albatross and the frigate bird will venture more than a thousand miles from land in their foraying expeditions.

It is this wonderful power of flight which makes the Bird a migrant, changing its home with the

season, and becoming an inhabitant of every clime. These migratory movements that sweep off the flocks of our feathered families from the brown fields and storm-beaten shores of autumn, and bring their glad voices again with the sunshine and blossoms of spring, form one of the most interesting features of bird-life, and have always attracted the attention of observers of Nature. A Scottish poet thus greets the returning swallow:

"The little comer 's coming,
The comer o'er the sea,
The comer of the summer, all
The summer days to be.
How pleasant, through the pleasant sleep,
Thy early twitter heard.
O swallow, by the lattice!
Glad days be thy reward."

The weeping prophet of Israel observed that "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow."

Milton enriches his grand poetical descriptions by pictures from bird migrations:

"So steers the prudent crane
Her annual voyage, borne on winds; the air
Floats as they pass, fanned with unnumbered plumes."

Longfellow says:

"Birds of passage sailed through the leaden air from the ice-bound,
Desolate northern bays to the shores of the tropical islands."

Tennyson calls them,

"Wild birds that change
Their season in the night, and wail their way
From cloud to cloud."

Our birds move southward on the approach of autumn. Some, like the swallows and the male warblers, retreat when summer has just passed its climax; others tarry till the snows and frosts of winter compel their departure. Some, like the robin and sparrows, merely go to the Northern or Middle States; while others, as the swallows, the redstart, and some other warblers, find a winter home on the sunny shores of the Mexican Gulf, or even in South America. Their line of migration is down the Atlantic coast. They cross the Gulf of Mexico by passing from Florida to Cuba, and thence to Yucatan.

Some of our birds, as the sparrows, thrushes, and warblers, move leisurely in their migrations, feeding their way from post to post, and occupy

weeks in coming from the Eastern States. Other swift-winged species, as the night-hawk and the swift, cover the same ground in two or three days. Birds migrate mostly by night, rising to a great height, often one or two miles, so as to have a broad view of the country and easily shape their course. The vast numbers composing these migratory flocks may be judged from the fact that 600 birds—warblers, finches, etc.—have been known to kill themselves in a single night, by dashing against the light-house of San Antonio, Cuba.

We have seen a fleet of a hundred robins arrive in the early dawn of a spring morning. The birds seemed much excited, flying about and calling loudly, as if conscious that they had accomplished an important undertaking, and were excited over a return to their old summer haunts. What a scene of glad jollity it was! Frozen snow covered the landscape, and the crystal jewels of winter flashed from every spray. But voices of friendship, and joy, and love were ringing from every tree top, and lading with rich music the golden billows of morning. It came a carnival of joy after winter's dreary barrenness, and bade us remember how much the world does owe to the

"Beautiful birds of lightsome wing,
Glad creatures that come with the voice of spring."

As birds migrate at night, we seldom see the winged armies on the march; but many a morning have we missed the thousands that the evening before crowded our bays or our woodlands. We always see the brant migrate. If the weather is favorable, they leave the sixth or seventh of June regularly. Just before sundown the flocks become unusually restless and noisy. Then, while the summer sky is aglow with the setting sun, and evening sheds her calm beauty over land and sea, in one dense cloud the birds rise directly from the bay, and, hovering over its waters at a great height for a few moments, with the hoarse clamor of a thousand voices, they sweep away, and are soon lost in the dimness of the northern sky.

In the early spring, during the period of migration, on a calm, clear night, if you take your stand beneath the star-lit sky, where there is no other noise to disturb, you will hear the almost constant fanning of wings high in the scintillating heavens, as the birds sweep on silently in their journey to their northern breeding grounds.

Longfellow gives a poetical turn to these faintly-heard sounds of wings:

"Oh say not so!
Those sounds that flow
In murmurs of delight and woe,
Come not from wings of birds,
This is the cry
Of souls, that high
On toiling, beating pinions fly,
Seeking a warmer clime."

Family of Thrushes.

THE ROBIN.

(Turdus migratorius)

Foremost among our birds for perfection of structure, intelligence, and ingenuity in architecture stands the well-known Robin. Its sociable habits, building its mud-lined nest in the corner of a fence or in the garden, and constantly frequenting the yard or the meadow in pursuit of its insect prey, together with its soft notes, poured out unrestrained by cottage door or orchard bough, make it a general favorite. Its song is something homely, but the notes are soft and agreeable; and heard at the dawn of a soft spring morning, or when the sun breaks out after a summer shower, floating soft echoes through the rural scene, it is a melody to be remembered and loved.

Robins arrive the first week in April; and their friendly calling from the dark fir tops is always welcomed as the harbinger of spring. They nest the last weeks in April, and raise two, sometimes three, broods in a season. Their nests are not only built in low bushes and hedges, but on the loftiest summits of the forest. The structure is bulky, consisting largely of mud, lined outside with coarse, and inside with fine vegetable fibres. The eggs, three to five in number, are over an inch in length, and of a uniform greenish blue color, though speckled ones have been seen. Robins feed chiefly on insects, worms, and grubs, but are fond of ripe fruit from the garden. When rearing their broods of young, they destroy enormous quantities of insects, and are of the greatest benefit to farmers.

In the mild season of 1889 flocks were here all winter. They wandered much, feeding on rowan berries and other soft fruits. Early arrivals feed about the shores and springs. In autumn, when their nesting duties are over, they gather in flocks, and frequent old pastures where worms are plenty. The summer flocks leave the last of October.

HERMIT THRUSH.

(Turdus Pallasi)

Closely allied to the Robin is that delicate recluse, the sweet-voiced Hermit Thrush. It never comes about our houses and gardens, but keeps to the secret shadows of the wood-land, pouring out from its hidden retreat a song of the most exquisite delicacy and richness. It would be but little known or cared for but for the marvellous beauty of its plaintive melody, which would entitle it to be called the Nightingale of our groves. On a calm evening in June, when the leafy bowers hang silent in shadowed beauty, and the amber light steals softly through the arches, and the holy stillness of the sunset hour rests on nature, the Hermit's song is loudest, clearest, and fullest. Then it fills the whole wood-land with pure, liquid notes, thrilling with emotion and delicate plaintiveness.

In singing, the bird chooses a lofty perch in some retired glade. It sits motionless on the bough, its speckled bosom swelled, its delicate bill parted, and its head raised to the clear field of the sky as it pours out those strains that seem

more intended for the realms of sunshine than for the shadows of earth.

The Hermit is less in size than the Robin, being two inches shorter, and of a much more delicate structure. Color, brownish-olive above, and white, marked with brown, below. The males arrive the last of April, and mope solitary in the shadows for some days, when the females arrive, and soon the tender melodies ring through the leafless groves. The nest of small twigs and grasses is built on the ground, and contains four or five greenish-blue eggs. It feeds on ground beetles and such other insects as inhabit woodlands.

THE OLIVE-BACKED THRUSH is sometimes heard singing here.

Family of Sylvians.

Of these diminutive birds we have the Ruby-crowned and Gold-crested Kinglets. The former *(Regulus calendula)* is a little over four inches in length, bright olive-green on the back and whitish below, tinged with yellowish; two white bars on

the dusky wing, and a bright scarlet patch on the crown. It is a summer visitant, with a soft-whispered voice and a hair-lined nest in the thick fir bushes.

The Gold-crest *(Regulus satrapa)* is a permanent resident, flocking amid the winter snows with the Chickadees and Nuthatches. It is the smallest of our songsters, except the Humming-bird; and its golden crest, and olive-green coat, and tiny wings, barred with white, make it a gem of feathered beauty. But what a mite! It is a perfect marvel, in the keenest winter weather, to see the tiny ball of animated down whispering its silvery song and foraging securely in the savage forest scenes. Then it puckers up its feathers and seems to suffer from the cold, but never ceases its silvery, whispered call notes. It feeds on insects and their eggs hidden in the chinks of the forest trees.

The nest, built in June, is a ball of soft mosses placed in a fir thicket, some four feet from the ground, and, though only two inches in diameter inside, contains ten creamy-white eggs.

Titmouse Family.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE.

(Parus atricapillus)

The Chickadees are the most common birds in in our winter woods. You no sooner enter the snow-draped thicket than out bobs a tiny black head to greet you with a merry *pee-dee*, and you see the little songsters flitting everywhere in the frozen boughs, perfectly at home as they pounce on the dormant insects that infest the foliage. Their activity is ceaseless. Flitting, twirling like acrobats on the naked sprays, heels up, head up, it makes no difference. Calling from the loftiest tree top, whispering from the low thicket, they are the very spirits of the winter wood-lands, without which these would often be destitute of animate life.

The Black-capped Chickadee is distinguished by his clear-ashy coat, and whitish vest, and conspicuous black crown and throat. Female the same color. The nest is built in a hole in a stump, which the little architect excavates for

himself. It is well lined with grass and wool, and contains eight or ten very small whitish eggs. The Chickadee is one of the boldest of birds. He usually builds in retired woods, but will approach dwellings if it suits him. He meets the wood-man in his native home without fear and as a friend; and among his fellows is one of the deadliest of combatants. Mr. H. D. Minot, of New England, tells us that the Chickadee sleeps with his head tucked under his wing.

HUDSONIAN CHICKADEE.

(Parus Hudsonicus)

The Hudsonian Chickadee is distinguished from the Black-capped by its olive-brown back, light chestnut sides, and the distinctly brown crown of its head. It is nearly as abundant as the Black-cap here, and its habits are similar. It nests in May, digging its own nest hole in a rampole, eight or ten feet from the ground. It is quieter and more retired in its disposition than the Black-cap, and much less pugnacious.

Nuthatch Family.

WHITE-BELLIED NUTHATCH.

(Sitta Carolinensis)

This is not a common bird with us, but a few are met with in the older settled parts of the country. We have seen them in the summer and late autumn. It is larger than the next species which it resembles in general appearance, but the under parts are white, and there is more white on the wings. It is less active and noisy. It is a beautiful, sedate little bird, wandering over the trunks of the deciduous forest trees uttering its peculiar *ick, ick, ick.*

RED-BELLIED NUTHATCH.

(Sitta Canadensis)

This is one of our most common resident birds, flocking with the Chickadees, and helping to relieve the monotony of the winter woods by its animated ways. From the Chickadees it is

distinguished by its more slender form, its short cut tail, wedge-shaped head, and harsh, rickety voice. Its color is clear ashy-blue above, and reddish-brown below, crown black, and white band over the eye. These birds have the peculiar habit of fastening a nut or seed in a chink of a tree, and then pecking it to pieces at their leisure. From this their name is derived. When early spring suns begin to warm the dark fir wood, the Nuthatches will mount the tallest summit, and, hitching round and round in an excited manner, rattle out their harsh little notes, like a perfect scolding frolic. Their mode of nesting is similar to the Chickadees'. Some seasons they are rare with us; in 1889 they were very common, exceeding the Chickadees in number.

Family of Creepers.

The Brown Creeper *(Certhia familiaris)* is a small, brown bird, streaked and spotted with white, somewhat resembling the Woodpeckers in its manners and habits. It lives on insects which

it takes from the chinks and cracks in the bark of forest trees. It may be seen constantly running up the great trunks, going round them in a spiral manner. When it arrives at the top, it flies down, and instantly begins the ascent on another trunk. Its bill is long, curved, and too weak for digging into wood. Its tail feathers are sharp-pointed to assist it in climbing.

Creepers are by no means common with us, but we have seen them both winter and summer.

Wren Family.

In early spring days, before the leafy drapery begins to shade the forest arches, but high aloft in the sunny sky the maples flash their crimson bloom, we will hear a varied song, unlike the notes of either Finch or Warbler. We will not be likely to see the songster, for this airy music comes from the diminutive Winter Wren *(Anorthura troglodytes hiemalis)* feeding among the loftiest sprays of sunny bloom. The shy little, brown-colored songster has just arrived in our woods,

and though charmed with his melody, we have little chance of seeing him now or during all his summer stay.

In July we hear the same sweet trill again, this time from a low, silver-lined maple thicket. If we follow the song cautiously and patiently it may perhaps lead us to the nest, a ball of dry green moss with a tiny aperture on one side for the entrance of the bird, placed on a fallen tree or stump. A friend informs me that one of the most interesting wood-land sights he ever saw, was a little Wren mother feeding her six tiny fledgelings, arranged in a row on the fallen tree where their nest was built.

Lark Family.

Our only Lark is the Shore Lark *(Eremophila alpestris)*. It is not common, but stray flocks come in April searching the stubble fields with the Snow Buntings which they much resemble. They are a heavier-built bird, however, and are easily distinguished by the large black area on the breast, and a peculiar feather which makes a slight horn on the head.

Wag-Tails.

The Titlark *(Anthus Ludovicianus)*, like the Shore Lark, is only a wanderer here, the flocks, however, coming in the fall and wandering restlessly over the plowed fields, after the grain is all gone. It is distinguished by its brown color — olive above and lighter below — by its devious, uncertain flight, and the habit of moving its tail up and down, when resting on the ground.

American Warblers.

Of these beautiful and sweet-voiced migrants we have fifteen species, which come during the sunny months of summer to give fresh joy to the leafy glory of the wood-land.

The modest-plumed Yellow-rump *(Dendræca coronata)* — so conspicuously marked by the bright yellow patch on its rump, exposed when it flies, and the general slaty-blue of its plumage — comes the first of May, searching for insects about the hedges and farm buildings. Its song is slender and homely, but the bird is robust and fearless, staying with us till the last chill days of October.

The Yellow Red-poll *(Dendræca palmarum)* and the Pine-creeping Warbler *(Dendræca pinus)* are early arrivals also. They are rare birds here, however. We see the yellow-plumed Pine-creeper very rarely in early spring, as it goes north to nest. We have only observed the Yellow Red-poll in the autumn on the barrens of Prince County.

With the first days of June the Warblers arrive in force. The bursting leaf then spreads its tender greenness, and summer's sunny glory rests on the wood-land which for two or three short months is to be their glad home. The Black-and-White Creeper *(Mniotilta varia)* runs over the trunks of trees, searching its food like a true "Creeper," uttering the most tenderly whispered little ditty of a song. Its color is described by its name, being streaked black and white. It nests with us, and, strangely enough for a persistent tree-climber, places its nest on the ground.

The Blue Yellow-back sometimes is here early in May. The Bay-breasted and Black-poll Warblers are not common, a few being seen passing north to nest.

The Yellow, or Summer Warbler *(Dendræca*

æstiva), in his gilded livery, comes much about our gardens and shade trees. Its song is sprightly and pleasing, one of the most agreeable that enlivens our garden bowers. It nests in low thickets, like raspberry or rose shrubbery. Its brood is raised in July, and, like most of its family, it is away with the August suns to a fairer clime.

The lively Redstart is one of the gayest songsters of our groves. Its livery of sable and brilliant flame darts everywhere, like a restless meteor, through the leafy shadows, and its loud, clear song rings far from the lofty tree tops. It is a nervous, restless bird, dashing in its song, its action, and vigorous pursuit of insects which it takes on the wing, like a Flycatcher. The golden Mourner rings out its lay in company with it — *thee weet, thee a weet weet* — and the brilliant Tennessee is its roving companion.

The female Redstart wears a modest brown dress trimmed with yellow, and in June builds her nest of woven grass and fibers fifteen feet from the ground. When the young are fledged she feeds them assiduously on a retired leafy perch. You may at any time see her perform this loving duty, for there is always a subdued,

whispering chitter as she approaches the young; and, warned by this call, you can creep silently into the thicket and watch the parent with her tender brood.

The Golden-crowned Accentor, or Oven-bird *(Siurus auricapillus)* is a true Warbler, though looking so much like a Thrush. In color it is a beautiful olive-green above with orange crown, and white below spotted with dusky on the breast. It comes the last of May, but we would not be aware of its presence if it were not for its loud and oft-repeated chant of *wee-chee, wee-chee, wee-chee,* uttered with increasing volubility to the end. Follow this call and you will find the beautiful bird actively exploring the leaf-covered ground for beetles, and looking nervously round for the approach of a companion. The nest is peculiar. It is a bulky structure of dried leaves and grasses, placed on the ground and roofed over to hide its four mottled eggs from intruding gaze.

All the Warblers are insect-eaters, and these crowds of restless songsters do immense service in keeping down the destructive insect hosts.

The males mostly retire the first week of

August, but the females stay the whole of the month, feeding their young on the myriad pyralides that infest the ripened foliage.

Tanagers.

The Scarlet Tanager *(Pyranga rubra)* is one of the most brilliant of American birds. Its color is scarlet, with black wings and tail. Its song is inferior, and it feeds on berries as well as on insects. It is but a rare visitant here. The only authentic instance I know of, being one seen at Morell by Dr. F. Beer.

Greenlets.

Intimately associated with the Warblers in their green-wood haunts is the Red-eyed Vireo, a modest, olive-tinted bird that never leaves the leafy shadows. Its song consists only of two notes, but so constantly repeated that they make a ceaseless ripple of gentle melody flowing through

the murmuring bowers. Its nest is a cup-like, hanging structure, woven of shreds of bark and suspended from the flexuous extremity of a slender limb. The eggs are three to five, white with a few dark specks.

Waxwings.

The Cedar Waxwing is a beautiful, cinnamon-colored bird, with conspicuous crest and peculiar, vermilion appendages to its wings. It is not common here, but, in August, will come in small numbers about the cherry trees, or call, like a wandering spirit of gentleness, in the lonely cedar swamps. It nests in the cedar bush, or, perhaps, in an orchard, and the eggs are not laid till late in July.

Swallows.

Of this graceful family we have four species. The White-bellied Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) is the earliest to arrive. With the first May suns

he is here, sweeping the deep field of the gentle spring sky. How buoyant his flight! What a grand spirit of strength, and joy, and freedom he seems, as he rushes through the clear heaven, over bay and barren field, shouting a cry of gladness on his arrival in his summer home!

These birds congregate in great numbers about mill-ponds or other sheets of water. Their circling and cycling, in spiral and maze, their darting and doubling, now skimming the glassy surface, then shooting upward into the blue sky till lost, like fading stars, on its brow, form the most wonderful and beautiful evolutions ever performed by winged wanderers of the air. They nest in hollow stumps in lonely wood-lands. The nests are lined with feathers, and contain pure white eggs.

The Eave Swallows *(P. lunifrons)* build their colonies of mud nests under the eaves of our barns, and

"The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed"

is abundant poetry in many of our country districts.

The Barn Swallow *(H. horreorum)*, with his long, forked tail, is the largest of the group, and

nest solitary, usually inside of barns. All these Swallows are brilliantly plumed birds, with coats of glossy steel-blue or green, and vested with snowy white or rufus; but the little Bank Swallow *(Cotile riparia)* is a lustreless courser of the air, draped only in dull, mouse-colored feathers.

It chooses, however, the grandest home of the tribe. Sometimes it makes its nest in a low bank, but more frequently in the lofty summits of the towering red cliffs that loom over ocean's surges, on the wild sea-coast. How airy and beautiful their ceaseless circling round the dark summit of the great sea-battlement, while the billows surge, and lash, and foam, and thunder below!

The birds dig their nest-holes two or three feet into the face of the clay top of the cliffs. At the inner extremities the nests of grass and feathers are placed, having each four or five pure white eggs.

Swallows stay with us but a short season. No sooner does summer arrive at its full maturity in August, and their young are fledged, than they are away to sunnier fields of the south. They gather in great flocks, whenever

their young are sufficiently experienced on the wing, and, first wandering south from one farmstead to another, finally sweep off from the Island.

Shrikes.

The Butcher-bird *(Lanius borealis)* is an ash-colored bird, with black wings and tail, the size of a Robin. When insects fail, it feeds on weaker members of the feathered family. It has the curious habit of impaling its victims on a thorn or pointed spray. Even insects are hung up in this way, as a butcher hangs up his meat.

The "bold brigand" is but seldom seen here. Only in autumn have we observed his solitary grey form, with the wary, suspicious flight of a felon, sweep our partly forsaken fields.

Finches.

Of this large family we have many interesting and beautiful species. They are wild, roving birds

of the field and the wood-land, strong of wing and animated in manner, while many of them are eminent songsters. They feed on insects in summer, but during the severe season a few stray seeds afford them a support, and some of them are with us at every season of the year.

The Pine Grosbeak *(Pinicola enucleator)* comes to us in the fall, sometimes in numbers, sometimes only a stray wanderer calling softly from the grove. This bird is nearly as large as a Robin, carmine red, paler or whitish on the belly, wings and tail dusky, the former with two white cross-bars. Females grey, marked with brownish-yellow. In dull November days, fifty of these forest beauties crowding on the cone-laden summit of a great spruce tree is one of the most pleasing sights. They are generally so tame that they are easily approached, and their soft voices and exceedingly gentle manners make them the most attractive of forest vagrants. In mid-winter they retire to the sheltered recesses of the coniferous woods, feasting on the abundant seeds, and enjoying the gentle music of their own call-notes and rich, Linnet-like songs. In April they are away to the wilds of the dreary North.

The Purple Finch, or Linnet *(Carpodacus purpureus)* is here also sometimes in winter, but he is always one of our gayest summer field-birds. He is not larger than a Sparrow, but his brilliant red color, his vivacity of manner, and the beauty, variety and gaiety of his song make him one of our most attractive birds. In April his rich, joyous rhapsody is heard from the naked woodlands. In May he mounts into the sky on hovering wing, like the Lark, singing as he soars. In June he is bounding over the fields, with a quick, clear call-note, gathering hair and grass for his nest in the thick spruce tree. And then, while his mate quietly attends to the family duties, he is away on the tall fir top with the summer breeze and the blue sky about him, pouring out such strains of joyous melody that the summer breeze and the sky seem only made to bear them on their bosom.

The Crossbills are wayward wanderers which come in large flocks some falls, and again are unseen for years. The White-winged *(Loxia leucoptera)* is a rich, red-plumed bird with blackish wings and tail, the former with two conspicuous white cross-bars. They have the

remarkable habit of breeding in winter, or very early in spring, while the weather is still severe. The mandibles are hooked and their points are crossed. This structure enables them to part the scales of cones and readily abstract the seeds on which they feed.

The American Crossbill *(L. Americana)* is also a red-plumed bird, but has no white bars on its wings. Large flocks sometimes come in late autumn about our spruce groves, feeding on the seeds. They are exceedingly tame and easily approached.

The Red-poll Linnet *(Ægiothus linaria)* is one of our common winter birds, though some winters it is scarcely seen at all. In size it is less than a Sparrow; color above dusky streaked with flaxen; crown dull crimson; under parts white, heavily streaked with dusky. Males, in late winter, may be seen with rosy breasts and rumps. In autumn these little birds come in compact flocks wandering from grove to grove in search of the ripened seeds of the yellow birches. On the swaying top of one of these great trees they make a happy company, rifling the abundant seeds and keeping each other society with soft,

sweet whispered notes. Sometimes a solitary bird will get separated from the flock, then the loud *pe-eel* rings through the autumn sky, and it is repeated until an answer comes and the wanderer is restored to the bosom of the loving flock. In cold winter weather the birds crowd close together, as if for warmth. They come about haystacks for seeds, and will fearlessly alight upon the loads which the farmer is building, having the innocence of creatures fresh from the untenanted wilds of nature.

Sometimes a rare specimen stays with us all summer and builds its nest in the dark fir thicket. Then the song of the male is a full, rattling melody, like that of the "Linnet," and scarce less clear and vigorous.

The golden-plumed American Goldfinch *(Astragalinus tristis)* is a gay rover in the fields of summer. His coat of brilliant yellow, varied with black on the long wing and tail feathers, and his clear, lively twit make him an attractive bird as he bounds about the summer pastures rifling seeds from the downy groups of syngenecious plants. He is here from May till October. The nest is built on a small tree, and is the most neatly

constructed of any of our birds' nests, containing five nearly pure white eggs.

The Pine Goldfinch *(Chrysomitris pinus)* is a winter bird, sometimes seen in company with the Chickadees and Redpolls, from which it is abundantly distinguished by its clear voice and strong, buoyant flight.

The Snow Bunting *(Plectrophanes nivalis)* is the winged sprite of our winter wilds. Its plumes mimic the purity of the crystal flakes, and it comes in flocks wayward as the whirling drifts. The Buntings are here in October, and then frequent lonely shores and sand-reefs, running over the sands in pursuit of marine insects in company with Sanderlings and Plovers. We see little of them till snow covers up their food in the wilds, then they come about the farmsteads looking for grain and stray seeds. They are very fond of oats which they shell with address, eating only the mealy kernel.

Among the roving winter flocks we only hear the softly-uttered flocking call; but, as the breeding season approaches, in April, the males will sometimes sing a sweet Linnet-like song, when enjoying the sunshine in some sheltered nook.

In this month also they leave us for their nesting in the far North. In the Arctic regions, Dr. Cowes tells us, their nests are bulky structures, composed of grass and moss and placed on the ground, in the shelter of a tussock of grass or a stone. Eggs are white, thickly mottled with brown.

The Sparrows form a familiar little group of this family, interesting on account of their intimate association with the scenes of our every-day life, their brusque familiarity, and their musical voices. The Song Sparrow *(Melospiza fasciata)* is the first to tune his notes round our doors in the spring. In fact the lively bird, in some cases, has been here all winter, hiding in the sheltered nooks of a barn or a stack-yard. But now he is out with his clear, musical ditty and his social ways, to warn us that the season of love is coming with the softening sky and the budding willow and the Robin's loud call in the grove. The nest is built on the ground, sheltered by a clod or stick, and composed of grass and hair. Sometimes it is placed on a low bush, if the intelligent bird has been often disturbed on the ground. The Black Snow-bird *(Junco hiemalis)* mingles its slender ditty with the first song of the Sparrows,

for it, too, has braved the winter's frosts and sported with the fleet-winged Buntings. In summer it nests in the same sunny borders as the Song Sparrow, hiding more securely its very similar nest, with lighter colored eggs. The Savanna Sparrow is the bird of the grass fields where its slender-built nest lies hidden in every clump of tangled herbage. From the grass fields, in warm June days, the slender whispers of these tiny songsters come as a gentle undertone to the general peal of summer's music. The loud burst of the Grass Finch, the clear, ringing whistle of the White-throat Sparrow, and the rapid chipping of the Chip Sparrow burst on the ear at rapid intervals; but the gentle notes of the Savannas never cease, mingling with the rustling of the grasses and the murmurs of the shrubbery that burden the passing breeze. The birds will sometimes mount a fence for a song, but on the least alarm descend and run through the grass, like mice. Savannas leave us early in September.

The Tree Sparrow *(Spezella monticola)* is a handsome Sparrow with a chestnut crown and an ashy-white breast. Like the Fox Sparrow and the White-crowned Sparrow, it is but a wayward

wanderer here, passing us in numbers during migration in spring and fall, but rarely stopping for its summer nestings in our groves. Its nest is in the lofty trees, and it is a bird of the groves, not of the sunny fields. In the leafy home of the Warbler and the mellow-tongued Thrush we are surprised to hear in mid-summer a loud twittered song, exactly like Junco's, and up in the highest arch of the rustling foliage our homely songster wooes his mate.

The Fox Sparrow *(Passerella iliaca)* is the largest of the Sparrows, and of a rich rusty-red color. He comes, while the April snows fill the wood-land, with a loud, musical song that startles the echoes of the lifeless scene.

The Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Sea-side Sparrow *(Ammodramus maritimus)* are not common birds. The former is reported from Cascumpeque, and I have seen the latter sporting through the meadows on the border of the great Tracadie marshes. It is a blythe fleet-winged bird that loves to breast the rude sea-breezes and sport its bright, yellow-trimmed dress where the fields of purple irises blow.

The Black-throated Bunting *(Spiza Americana)*

is a square-built clumsy-looking, greyish-brown bird, oddly marked with white eyelids and chin and coal-black throat. It is a southern bird, a member of the Carolinian fauna, and its regular presence here attests the suitability of the rich fields of P. E. Island as a home for the roving Fringillidæ.

The Rose-breasted Grosbeak *(Zamelodia ludoviciana)* is the shy beauty of the family, hiding its brilliant plumes and delightful song in the deep shadows of the primitive forest. It has been seen most frequently in the old timber growths of Lot 30, where its rich rolling song adds a finer charm to the wild music of the foaming streams.

This bird is said to possess all the qualities of a first-class cage-bird, readily submitting to confinement, and having vigor to endure it.

American Starlings.

The Bobolink *(Dolichonyx oryzivorus)* is a rare bird with us. Last summer we saw one on a sunny meadow on the banks of the

Elliot River. At first he tried to hide his strongly marked coat of black and white among the growing grass, but failing in this was away in his strong flight to the top of a poplar, then, without uttering a note, was gone from us forever.

Baltimore Oriole.

(Icterus galbula)

This flashing beauty of bird-life is said to have been seen at Cascumpeque, though we ourselves have never observed it.

Rusty Grackle.

Scolecophagus ferrugineus is the awkward scientific appendage to the name of this rather common bird, that in early spring comes whistling so shrilly and yet so sweetly along the borders of the glassy ponds. Blackbird is its common name, and who does not remember a summer eve when the silvery pond reflected the forms of the unbowed sedges,

and one lone swallow skimmed its surface, and the Robin's warble in the distant grove was faintly heard, and

"The sooty Blackbird
Mellowed his pipe, and softened every note."

The nest is built in a fir thicket. The four eggs are pale greyish marked with brown. In autumn the birds wander in flocks, the young conspicuous by their rusty coats.

The Purple Grackle *(Quiscalus purpureus)* is a less common bird, with glossy, iridescent black plumage. The nest is placed in a spruce or fir tree and contains five eggs marked with curiously arranged dark scrawls.

Crows and Jays.

The Common Crow *(Corvus frugivorus)* is very common here. Winter and summer his familiar cawing is about our doors. In the former season he finds a subsistence by pilfering from stacks and picking up refuse about yards and road-sides. In summer various fields afford him abundant food. He forages on the shores, digging clams

in the most expert manner, fishes smelts in the brook, and delights in a nutting excursion in the woods, while he never misses the opportunity of a good meal on grasshoppers, locusts and June bugs, on the sunny slopes of upland pastures.

Our Crows gather in great rookeries in the autumn. Until recently a grove in Charlottetown Park was the trysting place for central Queen's County. I have seen three thousand Crows going at sundown, on a calm autumn evening, in one long, black, silent stream of quivering pinions to this favorite resting place.

BLUE JAY.

(Cyanscitta cristata)

The bright-plumed Jay is one of our most familiar birds. In winter he comes, like a chieftain from the wilds, with gay crest and dainty steps, picking up refuse at our doors. Stray nuts in the forest afford him food now, too. In summer he feeds more luxuriously, robbing the nests of feebler birds and devouring their helpless young. It is part of his foraying tactics to imi-

tate the screech of the hawk, while he is hidden in a thicket, and, having thus driven away the parent birds, proceed to desolate their home. The nest is built in a tall tree and is of the same loose structure as a Crow's. The eggs also are dark olive-green thickly speckled.

His fluffy grey relative, the CANADIAN JAY *(Perisoreus Canadensis)*, is not now very common. Though seen more commonly in winter than in summer, it has been found nesting here early in April. The nest is very warmly constructed, being lined with moss and feathers.

Flycatchers.

The Kingbird *(Tyrannus Carolinensis)* is the most common of the Flycatchers. It is a dusky colored, crested bird, white below and on tip of tail. The last week in May it comes fluttering nervously about our fence borders, and remains till September gales have driven the insects from the dimming skies. It may be seen at any time in summer sitting motionless, apparently listless, on a fence stake or naked bough for

several minutes. Then it makes a sudden dash into the air and returns promptly to resume its motionless position on the same perch. This is its mode for catching insects, and is that followed by all the family. The Kingbird's nest is built on the limb of a lofty fir, and is defended with great spirit by its brave occupant. It is amusing to see the plucky little bird drive away such great marauders as crows and hawks which actually dread its persistent, bee-like assaults.

The Phœbe-bird *(Sayiornis fusca)* arrives with the Warblers, the first sunny days of June, and for three months afterwards makes the wild fells ring with its loud querulous cries of *pewee, pewee, pewee.* Trail's Flycatcher and the Least Flycatcher are also with us during the summer months.

Night-Hawk.

(Chordediles popetue)

This remarkable bird arrives with the Swallows and spends the same short summer season with us. Its clear *pe-ek*, ringing high over wood-land

and field, is the certain accompaniment of the dewy summer eve. What splendid powers of flight these birds exhibit in their aerial gambols, now mounting on steady wing till nearly lost to sight, then rushing earthward headlong with a *boom* that makes the whole field of air tremble! In these movements they are constantly in pursuit of insects, winnowing the thin air for the glittering motes that sport in the last rays of the setting sun. In late June they lay their grey mottled eggs in wild stump lands, on the bare ground, without the least sign of a nest. The downy young are found in such places without the least protection, the picture of helpless destitution. The quietness of the intelligent mother and her ability at decoying seem to be their protection, together with the fact that the appearance of the young is exactly that of the fragments of decayed and lichened wood among which they are placed. The first weeks of September, Night Hawks are seen in large flocks, sweeping quickly past in the high air, the individuals of the flock constantly crossing and re-crossing one another's path. Now they are on the move to warmer skies where insect wings forever glitter in the sunny air.

Chimney Swift.

(Chætura Pelasgica)

This bird, though popularly called "Swallow," is very distinct from the ordinary Swallows. Its sooty-black color, sharp, quickly vibrating wings, and very short tail mark it distinctly, wherever seen coursing the summer blue. When the country was in wilderness, these birds built in the hollows of trees, hundreds sometimes occupying one hollow trunk, and going to and from their resort in a black stream. The nest, now ordinarily placed in chimneys, is built of twigs fastened together by the gelatinous saliva of the birds; it contains four or five pure white eggs.

Humming-bird.

Our Humming-bird is the Ruby-throated *(Trochilus colubris)*, the only one that wanders so far from the floral riches of the tropics. Its upper parts are golden-green, sides green, a metallic gorget on its throat reflecting rich ruby red,

wings and forked tail purplish, below white. It comes in May, dashing, like an emerald meteor, through the early garden walks, and staying while the late September blossoms distil nectar along the faded borders. The tiny nest, with two diminutive white eggs, is placed on the upper side of a naked limb, and formed of the snowy down of the prairie willow, but stuccoed outside with the lichens peculiar to the limb on which it is built, so as to completely conceal it from observation. This jewelled mite, so nervous and delicate that if merely taken in the hand it may die of fear, defends its nest with the utmost bravery, dashing, like a mad hornet, at the head of the intruder, and screeching with its sharp squeaky voice as it rushes to the assault.

Kingfisher.

(Ceryle alcyon)

Who does not know that bold fisherman bird, the Belted Kingfisher, with his great quadrangular bill, his loud chattering laugh, his arrowy flight and his deep-dug hole in the river bank? His

delighted haunt is the upper river course, where the foliaged banks make mystic shadows on the moving crystal of the tide. Unseen he sits on some shadowed perch, motionless until the glint of scales passes in the stream below. Then, like a winged javelin, he dashes, and in a moment rises from the silvery spray with an exultant laugh, bearing off his finny prey to his home in the deep-drilled river bank. His nest-hole, seven or eight feet deep, is sunk in the face of a clear clay bank. The nest, where half a dozen hardy young ones are reared, consists of a few scattered fish bones lining the rude clay cavity.

Black-billed Cuckoo.

(Coccygus erythrophthalmus)

The Black-billed Cuckoo is a rare summer visitant that spends but a few short weeks of the leafy months with us. Tennyson says of the English Cuckoo:

> "To right and left
> The cuckoo told his name to all the hills."

Our bird is more discreet, and never says anything more than *cook, cook*, as it wanders from one shady perch to another. It is an exceedingly shy bird, hiding its rich, bronzed plumage most jealously in the thick foliage. It is not a parasite, like the English bird, but always builds a nest for its own eggs.

Woodpeckers.

We have seven species of these peculiar birds which obtain their living by digging the burrowing larvæ of insects out of their lairs in the solid trunks of timber trees. Their bills are chisel-pointed and of great strength, their feet are eminently adapted for grasping and climbing, and their rigid tail feathers are pointed to form a fulcrum for their bodies while they stand erect at their work of chipping into the firm wood.

The Downy, Hairy, and Black-backed Woodpeckers are all spotted, black and white birds which stay with us winter and summer. During the dreary months they add to the little life found in the lonely wood-lands by flitting

from trunk to trunk and demurely digging for their insect prey. But when the brightening suns of March gleam o'er the forest, they mount the hollow beech trees and, with a vigorous rap, rapping, make the naked wood-land ring. Like those of all Woodpeckers, their eggs are pure white. They are six in number, placed in a nest-hole excavated in the solid timber of lofty trees.

The great Black Woodpecker, or Logcock, is a lonely bird of the forest, but rarely seen now in the cleared state of our country. It is fifteen inches in length, mostly black in color, with a scarlet crest. It is a powerful wood-cutter, and the amount of chips that it will knock out of a decayed stump which it supposes to contain a meal of grubs, is something astonishing.

The Yellow-bellied Woodpecker *(Sphyropicus varius)*, with its beautifully varied plumage, is the Sapsucker which is sometimes thoughtless enough to strip the bark off orchard trees for the sake of obtaining the sweet cambium which lies next the wood.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is a southern bird which occasionally wanders here in mid-summer. The Golden-winged Woodpecker *(Colaptes auratus)*

is also a summer visitant and one of our common birds. In the soft days of April we listen for his calling with the early songsters of the grove. In May we catch him on a retired sunny perch cooing to his mate—a loving pair, thrilling with emotion and true wilderness affection. They sit close together on the perch, silent for a moment, then they rise slightly, stretch out their scarlet-banded necks, flutter their rich brown plumage, spread out their beautifully marked, fan-shaped tails, then turn half round toward each other, dodging their bodies and uttering a low whistling chuckle. That's wild bird courting. In the last of the month they have their nest dug in a decayed stump about as high as one can reach from the ground. They have twelve beautiful white eggs. These birds are very fond of ants and their nests are generally fragrant with the odor of formic acid. The Flicker, as he is sometimes called, will occasionally stay here till chill October is well advanced. Noisy and restless in the first of the season, he is very quiet and retired in autumn.

Owls.

In Prince Edward Island we have seven Owls, all fluffy grey, or brown, lovers of the darkness, seeking their prey during the shadowy hours and hiding in the darkest thickets during the day. The Great Snowy Owl alone hawks over the crystal fields of winter in broad daylight. It is an Arctic bird coming down from the desolate regions of Labrador only during the severest weather to search for mice, shrews, and other small quadrupeds on our less deeply inundated fields. Its plumage is white with dusky spots.

The Great Horned Owl *(Bubo Virginianus)* is is a huge, dark-colored owl of the primative forest, two feet in length and four feet in extent of wings, conspicuously marked by two large tufts of feathers which stand erect on its head like great ears. It sometimes comes about farm houses, robbing poultry yards, and making night hideous with its dismal hooting. These great birds lay but two eggs in the naked hollow of a tree.

The Screech Owl is a miniature *Bubo* and not half the size of *Virginianus*. It is strictly nocturnal and unable to stand the light of day.

Like other owls in this respect it is a great destroyer of mice, in search of which it comes into barns. The Great Grey Owl is a winter bird of the lonely forest of larger size even than the Great Horned Owl. The Barred Owl is a smaller bird much resembling the last.

The Hawk Owl *(Surnia funerea)* is a small-sized, trimly-formed bird much resembling a hawk both in its general appearance and diurnal habits.

The smallest of the family is the Acadian, or Saw-whet Owl, a grey and brown-plumed little fellow eight inches in length. Its most peculiar characteristic is its call note of *kook, kook*, sounded continuously during the still hours of calm, clear moonlit nights, in March and April. The constant and regular repetition of this single note, echoing through the rigid forest, sounds like the tolling of a bell, ringing out its steady peal on the starlit brilliancy of the crystal scene. This curious little bird nests in the hollow of a tree, laying five or six white eggs. Like most other Owls, it nests in April, having its young well advanced when the summer's struggle begins.

Falconidæ, or Hawks.

The Hawks are never abundant, but a fair number visit us every season, sailing in their majestic and buoyant flight over the shadowed summer fields, or dashing in cruel foray into the trembling flocks of lesser birds. When lengthening April days bring us soft blue skies bowing over the scarcely broken fields of snow, two or three individuals of Cooper's Hawk will often be seen in company wheeling leisurely round in the sunny upper air. They may be distinguished by their medium size and the light color of their under parts. Soon afterwards the graceful little Sparrow Hawk *(Falco sparverius)* comes in pairs sweeping through the open groves and wild lands. This little Hawk nests in the hollow of a tree. The Harrier is a blue-colored Hawk that scours our fields winter and summer. It flies low, having a wavering, uncertain gait as it pursues inferior game on the ground. The Goshawk *(Astur atricapillus)* is a large, dark-colored hawk that stays with us winter and summer. Its home is in the dark recesses of the forest and it is the terror of the winter woods. Often do we see

the ermine of winter stained with the blood of a rabbit or the bright plumes of a jay where this marauder has had his meal.

The Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Buzzards are the Hen Hawks of Summer. They nest with us, building their eyries in the summits of lofty trees, and occupying the same nest for a succession of years. It is the Red-tailed Buzzard that performs those wonderful aerial feats of wheeling round in great circles on motionless wings, steady as the revolution of a planet, but ascending with each revolve, till at length he is lost in the depth of the summer sky.

The Golden Eagle and the Bald Eagle visit us sometimes, and the Osprey pursues his summer fishing along our well-stored coasts.

The Peregrine Falcon *(Falco peregrinus)* is the most powerful and beautiful of our resident hawks, noted alike in Europe and America. It builds its eyrie in the lonely forest summits, and makes its forays along the wild rocky coasts where fleets of ducks and guillemots swarm the wave. Here we may see him rush, like a plumed bolt, from the cliffs, sweep up his quarry from the gleaming wave and bear it off to his home on the

hills. That winged thunderbolt of the Arctic regions, the white-plumed and terrifically powerful Gyrfalcon, visits us at times, like an electric flash, licking his hapless prey from the crystal fields of winter.

WILD PIGEON.

(Ectopistes migratorius)

Only a rare straggler of this once abundant and delicious species of game bird is now to be seen in our well-cultivated country. It is not the want of food, we think, but the destructive propensity of humanity which has frightened away the Pigeons. They were here in great numbers at the early settlement of the country, and they still occasionally appear in large flocks in the neighboring Provinces.

Partridges.

We have two species of Grouse, the Canada Grouse, or Spruce Partridge, and the Ruffed

Grouse, or Partridge. The first of these inhabits evergreen tracts and swamps, while the other frequents dry hardwoods and uplands. Both are quite common, particularly in less cultivated districts, where they feed on berries of heath plants and brambles in summer and on the seeds and buds of birches in winter.

The Ruffed Grouse has a conspicuous ruffle of dark feathers on each side of its neck. During the breeding season, in May and June, it has the habit of making a peculiar drumming noise, by beating the air with its wings. This muffled drumming of the Partridge, on dull, quiet spring days, is one of the most peculiar and weird undertones of wood-land scenes. Partridges nest on the ground, in a retired spruce thicket, laying about a dozen eggs.

Water Birds.

PLOVERS.

Leaving the Land Birds, we now turn to the great section of the feathered families consisting of birds which are seldom found except by the

water's edge, or on the unstable crystal of its bosom. Most of these birds pass in great migratory waves annually from warmer to colder regions. Thus they pass our Island twice in a season. In the spring they go more directly northward, many of them being unseen here; but in the autumn, when they return with their flocks of young, they spread all over these Eastern Provinces filling the bays and marshes with endless troops of wading and swimming fowl.

Autumn days are glorious in Prince Edward Island. The free range of the gilded autumn fields, the blazing forests on the hills, the crystal, dashing streams, the silvery bays, and the soft, dreamy light of the mellow sky that rests its beauty long on our sea-girt hills, make autumn, in many respects, the most delightful season of our year. It is then the bow-winged Plovers come in large, compact flocks, with their soft piping calls and gentle ways, to add fresh charm to the retirement of our streams and quiet marsh-borders.

The Golden Plover, a beautiful bird, ten inches in length, with its black coat all speckled with golden yellow, is the favorite of the tribe.

In September it is common on our marshes and damp meadows, being much pursued as a game bird. Its breeding place is the barren grounds of the desolate Northern Regions.

The Ring-neck Plover is a smaller and much more abundant bird. It is the first to return from the North, becoming common in August. Indeed, some few individuals nest here, about lonely shores and islands. I have seen them in breeding time at St. Peter's Island. The color is dark ashy-brown with a black ring on the breast. It nests in a grassy spot on the marsh and lays four speckled grey eggs.

The Pale Ring-neck is a very light-colored Plover that may be seen any time during summer on the sea-piled shingle beach in front of a salt marsh. Here the bird is constantly running about for insects on which it feeds, and, when disturbed, uttering a peculiarly sad wailing cry which is more than usually consonant with the grandeur and solitariness of the scenes which it frequents. The ceaseless voice of the deep, the grand solitude of the shore, the ever restless buffeting wind find a strange accompaniment in this sad, wailing voice running through the discord of nature.

The bird lays its eggs on the bare shingle, as a gull does on the sand, and it uses all its powers of feint and decoy to allure the stranger away from its strangely exposed treasures. But though so exposed, they are very difficult to discover, so well do they mimic the colors of the grey, sun-bleached shingle and sand. Indeed the color of the bird itself so closely resembles that of the shingle, that when it squats down on the beach, it is impossible for the eye to distinguish it.

The Kildeer Plover is a larger bird than the Ring-neck, and has two black bands on its breast. It stays late, being here the last of October.

NORTHERN PHALAROPE.

(Lobipes hyperboreus)

This bird appears in our harbors in late fall, when other water-fowl are getting scarce. It appears in flocks of several hundreds, flying about in the wildest manner—dashing into the water all together, and as they do so, making the spray fly, dipping under the surface in an extreme hurry, then rising to the wing again and off to

another station, as if the flock were playing a wild game of "follow your leader." A few days at this time is all we see them.

Snipes, Etc.

The Woodcock is common in Prince Edward Island. It arrives early in May and makes its chief resort along the wet meadows that border streams, though at times it frequents any rich open wood. Its long bill is intended to aid it in exploring wet ground for worms and grubs, and we have seen a little patch of wet marsh by a creek quite studded with these bunchy brown birds driving their long bills everywhere into the richly stocked ooze. Then, what a whir of wings there was when they observed the intruder! It is the choice game bird of this family, and most pursued by sportsmen.

The American Snipe, nearly as large, but much less fat and clumsy than the Woodcock, is a graceful wanderer about our sea-shores and stream borders. I have not seen it in flocks, but a solitary Jack Snipe may meet you in any sea-side excursion in late autumn.

Not so uncommon is the Semipalmated Sandpiper, endless flocks of which swarm along our muddy shores in September, tripping with dainty steps among the mud and weeds, as they secure their meal of marine insects. At first, you think that the Pewits have increased suddenly in numbers. But then you observe their clear white underparts, and that they have not the habit of bobbing up and down their tails, and when they rise and fly, their steady flight tells you that the Northern birds have returned from their nesting.

Nearly related to the last is the Least Sandpiper, or Peep. It too goes to nest among the "fogs of rock-girdled Labrador;" but, as I have seen it, during the breeding season, on the borders of our own breezy marshes and sun-lit ponds, I think it sometimes nests among those green swells that lie on the southern side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is the least of the Sandpipers, and, presuming on its own insignificance, it is the least inclined to fly at the approach of man. Often, when every other bird on the marsh had taken wing at our approach, we have found ourselves right among a group of those peeping trifles, unconcernedly exploring the riches of some muddy hole right at our feet.

Bonaparte's Sandpiper is a large bird and a common autumn visitant.

The Sanderling *(Calidris arenaria)* is a light-colored Sandpiper, larger than a Ring-neck Plover. It appears in numbers on the sea-washed reefs and dunes of our northern coast, during the autumnal migrations, while the young are in their immature plumage. They are very quiet birds, running along the sands ahead of the traveller, bobbing down to pick up seeds or insects, uttering a soft, suppressed *peep*, to preserve the company of the flock, and caring little while they are a stone's throw in advance of the intruder. Its presence does much, in the late autumn, to relieve the dreariness of the storm-lashed, desolate dunes by the sea.

The Willet *(Symphemia semipalmata)* is a large Sandpiper, being sixteen inches in length. It is light-ash, speckled with dusky above, and white below. Willets are restless and noisy birds, making themselves well known round the marsh which they frequent, but they are not common with us.

The Greater Yellow-legs is a bird something less in size than the Willet and of darker color, but possessing the same gaunt, long-nosed appear-

ance. It comes to Prince Edward Island early in May. We see little of it during all the early part of summer, for it is then quietly employed about its nesting, far up the rivers, where islets of bright green marsh grass bestud the silvery border of the tide. When intruded on, it is noisy and excited, flying round the marsh and uttering its loud piercing cries. Its large dark-colored eggs are placed in a carelessly built nest, in a tuft of grass, on the border of the marsh. In September it is common along the shores with the other Sandpipers, the most noisy, wary, and unapproachable of the crowd.

The Spotted Sandpiper, or "Pee-weet," is our really "home bird" of the family. It is with us the whole summer from May till October, enlivening with its mellow piping every sea-coast pasture in the land. At eve, it is flitting along the shadowed margin of the tide, sounding a rapid note for its mate. At noon, it is swinging in quick, nervous flights over the meadows, where its nesting charge is hid in the scented grass, or quietly foraging for a meal in the turnip patch. Its curious dodging and tilting of its body, as it pursues insects on the shore, its feints aud devices

as it endeavors to lead away the intruder from its young, and its four great mottled eggs placed in a most carelessly built nest make this bird a curiosity to every amateur in ornithology; and its soft, piping voice, all summer long in the romantic walks by the sea border, make it dear to every lover of nature.

But a much greater favorite with the sportsman is the Bartramian Sandpiper, or the "Upland Plover," as it is usually called. This is a dark-colored bird, a foot in length, that keeps in close, swift-flying flocks, shifting often from one pasture-ground to another. It is with us in September and October, and in great numbers falls before the sportsman's murderous piece.

The Sickle-bill Curlew is an uncommon bird with us, but a few specimens are preserved in private collections. Its long, curved bill makes it a curiosity.

GLOSSY IBIS.

(Plegadis falcinellus)

This beautiful bird is an occasional visitant, being known among sportsmen as "black curlew."

GREAT BLUE HERON.

(Ardea herodias)

This is the largest of our wading birds, and one of the most common. The tall, gaunt form of the "crane" standing at low water in the weedy shallows is everywhere a picturesque feature of our summer coast. A solitary bird or two comes in April, while snow and ice are plenty. Then it may be seen standing on the ice and patiently watching at a hole for a precarious meal. It is the first of June before "cranes" become common. Then they attend to their nesting, which is conducted in great colonies, called heronries. There is a noted heronry in an old spruce forest at the head of Howell's Brook. The birds from this encampment frequent the bays many miles away on both sides of the Island. They are at their fishing before break of day, and the late glimpse of twilight at evening sees the great broad wings slowly coursing over the darkened hills, as the faithful fisher returns with the late burden to its young. Awkward as the "crane" looks, it is very successful in capturing game.

The lank grey form stands motionless in the rippling tide until the unwary fishes forget that the crooked shadow is a thing of life at all. Then, slowly the huge, rapier-like bill, poised on the slender arched neck, is lowered to the level of the water, and with rapid, but silent movements, the sportive finnies are conveyed one by one to his pouch. I have disturbed a Heron after such a "haul," and he was unable to rise from the ground until he had first disgorged ten good sized fishes from his crop. In the latter part of summer, the young, full-fledged, are down to the fishing with their parents. Then, on a glowing autumn evening, when the broad reach of the weedy bay is all glinting with golden light, the tall, light-colored forms of scores of these birds, standing all over its surface, and enlarged in appearance by the vividly reflected light, look more like phantoms of the deep than the very practical fishers that they are. When the tide is up, "cranes" rest themselves roosting on trees in the vicinity of the water, or go to the meadows for a meal of grasshoppers.

The American Bittern *(Botaurus mugitans)* is much less common than the Heron. A few

frequent the ponds and marshes of the north shore, and an odd pair may be found nesting in creek bottoms anywhere through the country; where, at night, their curious "booming," or "stake driving," arouses the curiosity or superstition of country strollers. It nests in a soft reedy bog, and feeds largely on frogs, lizards, and snakes.

The American Coot, a dark-colored bird the size of a Teal, but distinctly allied to the Rails, frequents our sedgy river borders in summer time. The nest is built of a mass of dried reeds, so as to float on the water. Its sharp-pointed bill, webless feet, and general appearance win for it the common name of "marsh hen."

Family Anatidæ.

AMERICAN WILD SWAN.

(Cygnus columbianus)

This magnificent bird but seldom visits our shores, its line of migration being more inland, probably up the Hudson River Valley. A specimen was

taken at Wheatley River, by Mr. William Stead, October 7th, 1885, and is now in a private collection in Charlottetown.

When the first soft skies of March bow tenderly over the broken fields of snow, and the bared head-lands stand red and flaming above the crystal floor of the river, then, on the amber verge of the southern heaven, the faint lines of the Common Wild Goose are seen, and the deep-voiced *honk* of its flocking call sounds from afar, the advance herald of approaching spring. After two or three weeks, the V-shaped lines of the flocks become quite common, as vast numbers press on to their breeding grounds in the North. When the ice breaks in the harbors, the flocks come into the dappled blue spaces, noisy and restless, gathering into larger flocks, composed of several hundred individuals, as April advances; and finally, at its close, nearly all disappear, leaving our bays to the humbler tribes of Ducks and Brant. While here, they feed largely on eel-grass (*Vallisneria spiralis*). Some few individuals have been known to breed here; and some remain during mild winters.

Individuals of the White, or Snow Goose sometimes appear in the flocks of common Wild Geese, early in the season. The White-fronted Goose is also here at times.

Following the Geese, soon after the ice breaks up, Brant come into our harbors, always in large flocks, of one hundred or more. They are much smaller than Geese, being only two feet in length, while Geese are three feet. They remain in our quiet bays in great numbers all through the sunny days of May, scattering in freedom over the gleaming waters, dappling in the surface, and sounding their hoarse, sonorous, croaking calls through the still air of calm spring days. June 6th, if the weather is favorable, is their date for leaving for the North, when they may be seen departing in great flocks in the calm of declining days. They are but little seen during their return migration in October.

The dreary winters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, during which ice sometimes forms solid to the Magdalens, offer little inducement for water-fowl to stay with us; yet in the severest months, wherever a stretch of blue wave breaks among the floes, Golden-eyes, or Whistlers, Pintails and

Goosanders defy the rigors of the season. In midwinter, I have been on the coast, when huge masses of ice buried up the whole shore-line, stretching seaward as far as the eye could see. One opening remained, however, to leeward of a reef. The blue waves rolled sullen 'neath the weight of the wintry wind, and dashed angry, frozen foam over the stranded floes. The air was thick with frozen mist, obscuring the distant vision, and making the dull winter sunlight more hazy still. While gazing at the wild scene, where frost and tempest held terrific sway, I have been startled to see the form of a Whistler shoot, with sounding wings, through the misty tempest, or observe the soft-voiced Pintail dip beneath the angry wave, or the stately Goosander sail calmly on its surging bosom, while the Herring Gull, with wild shriek, breasted the tempest overhead. The Whistler nests in our creeks, building under brush on the ground, and in July leads its ducklings out on the bays. The beautiful little bird, plumed with white, black, and glossy green, in autumn days, sports innocently along the shores, diving often and rapidly, and resting quietly on the glassy surface with little fear of the spectator if it is not pursued.

The Black Duck (*Anas obscura*) is sometimes with us all winter too, but it is a bird of the sheltered river, not of the foaming Gulf. In summer, it disports on the broad estuary, chasing its fellows through the splashing water, and shouting loud quacks in its glee. It wanders in companies of a score or more when out on the bay, but disperses in very small numbers when it goes up to the marshes to feed. At dusk, I have seen large numbers going out to lonely places at sea, for security over night. The female hides her nest in the brushwood, near the shores, or in long grass on the sand hills, and deposits her seven to thirteen greenish eggs in a bulky, comfortable receptacle, built of dry grass, with some down. She lays in June or July, and in August, has her brood around her out on the river. So close do the ducklings keep to the mother, that, from a distance, you would take the whole group for one object. Most wary is the mother now as she floats the broad, silvery tide, or steals furtively to the covert on the bank. In winter a few of these ducks stay about the head-waters of rivers and large springs. They do not dive for food,

but take insects and molluscs on the surface, and their flesh is excellent.

The Green-winged Teal and the Blue-winged Teal are small Ducks that appear in large flocks during the spring and fall migrations.

Our most beautifully plumed water-fowl is the Wood Duck *(Aix sponsa)*. It is a small-sized Duck, resplendent in black and white, and brilliant coppery, purple, green, and chestnut. It is peculiar for nesting in holes in trees.

When the leaden skies of late fall days cast their sombre hues over our bays, if we approach quietly the sheltered side of an islet or headland, sailing and diving actively with the Golden-eyes and Mergansers, we will see another small Duck, much resembling the first, but with a great puffed, black head, all brilliant with green and purple iridescence. This is the Buffle-head Duck, a purely northern species, that is here only in early winter and spring.

The Eider Duck is a large bird, two feet in length. The male, in breeding plumage, is white, with the under parts and rump black, and the head washed with green. The females are mottled brown. This is the bird which supplies the

prized eider down of commerce. The flocks come round our shores in autumn, and are here early in the spring, when the ice-laden bays and misty air resemble their home of the North. They are quiet northern birds, loving to sit in the lee of the floes, uttering not a sound till dusk of evening when they call their missing mates to the nightly gathering.

The Black Scoter is a beautiful velvety-black bird, with a prominent, orange-colored gibbosity at the base of its bill. It is common in the late fall, and probably stays in the Gulf during mild winters. The Velvet Scoter, called "Sea-Coot," is quite common in autumn and spring. It is distinguished by a large white patch on the wing and another under the eye.

The Surf Duck is another Scoter, distinguished by having only a white patch on the forehead and another on the nape. It is common here in the fall with the general crowd of ducks that swarm the bays at that time.

The Red-breasted Merganser *(Mergus serrator)* is much smaller than the boreal Goosander, and is not a winter bird with us. Mergansers come into our waters with the first breaking of the ice,

the middle of April. A few stay and breed here, but the greater mass press northward in the spring migration, and are not seen again till the fall. They are graceful birds, with long, flat bodies, and slender bills. Males have glossy green heads, with a thin crest, back and wings white and black, breast reddish. They are graceful and active divers, slipping under the water without any splash or inverting of the body, and in flight make no whistling, as Golden-eyes do. They are among the most abundant birds of our bays during the migratory seasons.

GANNET, OR SOLAN GOOSE.

(Sula bassana)

The Gannet resembles a goose in general appearance, but is white with black primaries, like the ordinary Sea Gull, and fishes by dashing into the water for its prey, as Sea Gulls do. Gannets are common on the fishing grounds of the Gulf, and breed on the lonely Bird Rocks, in its mid-waters, north of the Magdalens.

The Common Cormorant—a heavy, black bird,

as large as a goose—is common in the outer bays late in the autumn. It breeds on lonely rocky islets.

Gulls and Terns.

The Great Black-backed Gull *(Larus marinus)* is the largest of our Gulls, distinctly marked by its blackish-purple mantle. It is a winter bird and may be seen sitting on the ice floes, while a patch of blue water remains, leisurely awaiting the appearance of game. Here it is acompanied by the more active Herring Gulls and the small-sized Kittawakes. Black-backs are never very common, but even in mid-summer a few of the great, lazy birds will be seen sitting about the broad sandflats of the coast, where they feed on the garbage thrown up by the waves. Such lonely reefs as St. Peter's Bar are its chief resort. When disturbed, it spreads its great wings to the breeze, runs on tip toe along the sand, and swings heavily into the air; and, flying but a short distance, lights in a pool with a contented *kack, kack*, while the Herring

Gull, on snowy wing, wheels high in the blue. But the Black-back can spread its five feet of white pinions and sweep far over the sea. Then its movements are majestic and grand, as with keen eye it watches for the larger game of the deep. Both this bird and the Herring Gull, feed much on mollusca, breaking such strong shells as those of *Mactra solidissima* with their bills.

The Herring Gull is the bird of the harbor and the bay, its snowy pinions forever coursing over the dappling blue, or dipping lightly into its foam. It may be found wandering far in the lonely Gulf, seeking adventurously for the great schools of food fish, and it is perfectly at home in the busiest sea-ports, gleaning the offal of fishing piers and wharfs. We will even see it contending for a meal off a carcass, on the ice, in mid-winter, with a group of hungry crows. The Herring Gull is withal a tyrant in his own field, robbing the smaller gulls, when they have made a catch, or pirating from a fleet of industrious ducks, as they bring their game to the surface. Both these large Gulls go away to lonely islands and reefs for their nesting, depositing their eggs on the naked sand, where

there is nothing to disturb them, and trusting to the heat of the July sun to hatch the young.

Bonaparte's Gull *(Chroicocephalus philadelphia)* is our smallest and most abundant species in summer. Bonapartes come here the latter part of May, in company with the Terns, with whom they had travelled all the way from their wintering on the shores of Florida. They appear in large flocks at once, dipping, and whirling, and crossing, like drifting snow flakes, over the sunny wave. They love the quiet river waters, going up even into narrow creeks in pursuit of their fishing. With the fleet-winged Terns, they are the soul of life in our harbors, their soft *cher* mingling harmoniously with the harsh shrieking of the former. Bonapartes and Terns go, in July, to the outer reefs and sand banks for their nesting. Great numbers nest together, and such a place is then a scene of the most romantic activity and eager parental solicitude. The swift white wings are sweeping to and fro through the clear summer sky. The birds wander far over the sea in pursuit of their prey, and hastily return with the captured prize for their young. If

an intruder approaches, in one dense cloud, like a flight of air-borne arrows, they sweep towards him with piercing shrieks that plead for his departure.

When their young are fledged, they delight to rest in a great white flock in the calm water by the edge of a reef. Many heads are tucked under the snowy wings, in perfect composure. Not a plume stirs, save that the sportive sea breeze ruffles a downy feather now and then. But a winged brother arrives from an excursion to sea, instantly every graceful pinion is raised aloft to welcome him, and then they settle down quietly again to their repose on the dappled breast of the blue.

Our two species of Terns are the Wilson's, or Common Tern, and the Arctic Tern. The first is marked by a black cap on its head. The Arctic Tern is a smaller bird, but has a longer forked tail, and is the least common of the two

PETRELS.

Leach's Petrel and Wilson's Petrel are both dark-colored little birds, about eight inches long.

They are deep-water birds, seldom seen on the coast, but occasionally blown ashore during storms.

LOONS.

The Great Northern Diver, or Loon, *(Colymbus torquatus)* is common in our waters, remaining summer and winter, when there is open water. It is a large bird, three feet in length. Color black, marked with numerous square white spots. It breeds in our harbors, where we often see it perform its surprising diving feats and hear its weird cries.

The Red-throated Diver is seen here in winter and fall.

Auks.

SEA DOVE, OR DOVEKIE.

(Alle nigricans)

This beautiful little species of Auk—glossy blue-black, with white front and white markings

on wing and over eye—is an Arctic species, seen here only during the tempests of winter.

GUILLEMOT.

The Black Guillemot, or Sea Pigeon, makes the red cliffs of our northern shore its nesting place in summer. The birds deposit their two dull-greenish eggs in the naked clefts of the sandstone rocks. On quiet summer days they love to sit upright in rows on the inaccessible rock ledges, looking grotesquely like so many black bottles ranged on a shelf, or float in dark groups on the glassy billows below. As we wander over the soft green sward that crowns these lofty battlements of the deep, and watch the heaving blue, and drink in the fresh wandering breeze and the great joy of the summer's sky, the plaintive whistling of these gentle birds, coming up with the moan of the deep, forms a wild note in nature's music not soon to be forgotten.

NOTE.—The English, or House Sparrow, was first seen in P. E. Island, in Charlottetown, November 26th, 1886. Since then it has multiplied rapidly in the city. Foraging in the streets and yards in winter, nesting in inaccessible nooks of the tallest houses in summer, and making excursions in autumn to feast in suburban grain-fields, it seems perfectly at home and well established here.

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